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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DINNER

The University of Chicago Dinner, which is held annually during the week of the Meeting of the Department of Superintendence, will be held Wednesday evening, March 1, at the Hamilton Club, 20 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois. Alumni, former students, and friends of the University are most cordially invited. Guests will assemble at six o'clock in the Lounge Room on the third floor. Dinner will be served promptly at six-thirty. The cost is \$2.00 per plate. Please order tickets as soon as possible from W. G. Whitford, School of Education, University of Chicago.

THE RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN NEW YORK STATE

During the last quarter of a century efforts at rural-school improvement have centered quite extensively in changes in the local unit of school administration. The great movement for consolidation has been the result of a realization that there must be an enlargement of the district and a change in its administrative organization and the functioning of the administrative machinery. An analysis of the local district in the state of New York and its effectiveness in establishing and maintaining a good school was made recently by Thomas H. Shelby, A.M., University of Texas. The sources of information were statutes and judicial decisions of the State Department of Education, annual reports of district school superintendents, age-grade reports from teachers, questionnaires from district superintendents and school trustees, personal visitation of schools and school officials in the state of New York, and reports of field workers on special aspects of the subject. The author spent approximately three months in the state gathering the material for the study.

The study gives a brief historical perspective of the development of the system, followed by a consideration of the school district, the annual school meeting, the trustee, and the school. The standard for judging the effectiveness of administrative organization and functioning is assumed to be a good school. The study reveals the following salient facts: (1) 82 per cent of all schools in the state are one-teacher institutions and 43 per cent of these, or approximately 3,600, have an average daily attendance of ten or fewer pupils. (2) The average school plant in one-teacher schools including site, building, and equipment, is inferior. (3) The annual school meeting of inhabitants, which votes the school budget for the year and which has been in use since the inauguration of the system, is proving a hindrance to school betterment. (4) The trustee of the school, who is charged under the law with the responsibility of the election of teachers, the adoption of rules and regulations, and the general management of the schools, is performing professional duties for which he is generally not fitted either by nature or by training. (5) There is almost a total absence of consolidated schools and rural high schools in the open country. (6) The unequal distribution of wealth in school districts makes the burden of local support thirty-five times as great in some instances as in others. (7) Children in rural schools do not progress normally, and there is an unwarranted elimination in the upper elementary grades. (8) There is absence of effective school leadership in rural sections.

The study leads to four major suggestions: (1) Change in local unit, both as to size and as to functions of administrative machinery. (2) Change in the intermediate unit above the local unit as to administrative organization and functions. (3) Expert professional service and leadership, both as to the local district and the intermediate unit through the office of the superintendent of the intermediate unit. (4) More local autonomy and opportunity for initiative and less direction from the State Department of Education.